

January 30, 2009

Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Room SD-131
US Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harkin,

Partnership for Prevention urges you to preserve funding for tobacco cessation programs that are currently part of the economic stimulus bill. Recent allegations that such programs amount to “pork” and don’t constitute true economic stimulus demonstrate a basic lack of knowledge about these programs and how they operate.

This funding is consistent with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Best Practices, which calls for increasing support for state quitlines so that they have the infrastructure to provide comprehensive treatment to at least 10% of all tobacco users each year.

Funding additional quitlines and cessation programs will help provide more of the services needed to empower people to quit smoking. Doing so will produce jobs to staff and promote the quitlines and other cessation programs. Given that smoking is responsible for over 400,000 deaths each year in the United States and for \$193 billion annually in healthcare costs and lost worker productivity, this is no small matter.

Currently, 70 percent of smokers in this country say they want to quit, but most of them who try to quit don’t use proven techniques that can double or even triple their chances of succeeding. This is due largely to a lack of access to these programs.

In November, a coalition of leaders from major business, labor, insurance, health care, and government institutions were joined by three former HHS Secretaries and three former Surgeons General in endorsing a Call for ACTION (Access to Cessation Treatment for Tobacco In Our Nation). The CFA – a copy of which is attached - is a bold plan to provide every American with access to comprehensive tobacco cessation treatment services by the year 2020.

At a time of record budget deficits and economic uncertainty, helping more tobacco users quit is a critical investment of taxpayer dollars in a woefully underdeveloped public health infrastructure. The funding for tobacco cessation programs would create jobs and do so in a way that is consistent with sound fiscal policy and sound public health policy.

Sincerely,



Corinne G. Husten, MD, MPH
Interim President
Partnership for Prevention